

# BMC's ramp route for easy access

**BIBHUTI BARIK**

## ON THE RIGHT TRACK



**A ramp with guiding tiles at Nirman Soudha (office of the chief engineer, public works department) in Bhubaneswar. Picture by Ashwinee Patil**

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** The two-storeyed Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) building will soon have a ramp to facilitate the entry of physically-challenged people, pregnant women and senior citizens.

A team of engineers and architects today conducted an accessibility audit at the BMC building. The team decided to make structural changes that includes adding a ramp.

Sources said necessary modifications to the structure would be carried out to help people with disability.

"We will act on the suggestions given by the access co-ordination cell comprising engineers and planners. We will ask our engineers to act immediately and make necessary amendments to the structures," said municipal commissioner Vishal Kumar Dev.

For the first time, the BMC organised a two-day workshop on 'accessibility for all' to sensitise technical persons in different government organisations about the need to follow the National Building Code and the universal design to ensure easy accessibility for all into buildings.

To take forward the theoretical aspects discussed at the meet, experts will audit existing public buildings and provide suggestions to make the structures compliant with the People With Disability Act, (PWD) 1995.

The two-day workshop, which concluded today, saw the participation of technical experts from the BMC, Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Cuttack Municipal Corporation, public works department

and directorate of town planning. Experts from Samartham, New Delhi, and city-based organisation Aaina participated as resource persons.

Executive director, National Centre for Accessible Environments, Anjalee Agarwal said: "The access co-ordina-

tion cell will now act as per an action plan. Within three months it will prepare an audit report for 10 public buildings so that the authorities concerned will be given suggestion change their structures and make them accessible to all. Not only in

Bhubaneswar, but the aim is to make all public offices in Orissa accessible."

Jyoshna Sahoo, coordinator from Aaina, said: "Some buildings in the capital such as, the library, local head office of the State Bank of India, State Secretariat and Capital

Hospital have ramps. But only having ramps is not enough. While some ramps have elevation problem, absence of support on both sides, tiles to guide the physically challenged and also access to toilets and other vital destinations after landing from the ramps are

- Buildings such as Rabindra Mandap, state library, local head office of the State Bank of India, Secretariat and the Capital Hospital have ramps
- Buildings of Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation do not have ramps
- The structures with ramps also lack facilities such as accessibility to toilets, low-lying counters and space to operate while on a wheelchair
- Not a single structure in Bhubaneswar is 100 per cent accessible feel experts
- Public places such as parks, government offices, schools, colleges and even recreation centres need accessible ways for entry and exit
- An access coordination cell conducted an audit of the BMC building today and submitted its report based on which the municipal corporation authorities will make structural changes
- The cell will conduct accessibility audit in other structures and will prepare reports for 10 public buildings in three months
- The team will audit safety on roads, bus stops, signage in public places including parks, railway station and entertainment centres
- Guidelines of the National Building Code, central public works department and the local development authority will be implemented in all public places for easy accessibility

to have structural changes for accessibility as they also include safety issues."

"Old buildings may have difficulty to include the ramps but new structures should include them from the beginning," she added.

An PWD engineer admitted that old public places lack ramps, but new structures such as, the Special Treasury No. 1 and e-procurement building near Power House Square were equipped with ramps. We have already provided a ramp for the heads of building, but other provisions are yet to be included. Similarly the other two multi-storeyed structures near the building on the same campus will soon have the ramps.

"The chief engineer's office —Nirman Soudha — has a stiff elevation on the front portion so a nice ramp was constructed last month for the physically challenged with proper tiles for the blind," he added.

A senior engineer of directorate of town planning said: "We will include the provisions as per PWD Act, 1995, in all public places in the capital and state. The Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) has also provisions as per the Act and it will be followed in all the structures."

However, he could not answer why the office building of BDA has no ramp as it is an important public office in the capital. "The comprehensive detailing as per the accessibility norms in all places including schools, parks, bus terminals and railway stations should also be audited by the access coordination cell, which will work in coordination with the various state government agencies," added Agarwal.

missing. "In a way all the buildings in the city need to rethink on the accessibility account and they have to act really faster." Not only the buildings, but structures such as, footpaths, bus stops, tourism sites and other vital destinations need